People of the Desert

Story and Art by Miyazaki Hayao under the pen name "Akitsu Saburou."

Translated by Hox

During the 11th century, before the arrival of the Mongols, Central Asia was dominated by a fierce nomadic group known as the Kittarls.

新れんさい劇画

風の沙漠の鼠

CHAPTER 1

Akitsu Saburou
(Miyazaki Hayao)

In the Soqute clan of sheep-herders, there was a young boy named Tem who lived near an oasis, raising sheep with his father, Shikim.

"Father, it's camel ..!"

The Kittarl clan ruled over many other clans in the land. In their pursuit of conquest, they turned countless numbers of towns and castles into rubble to be buried under the sand.

When the camel stopped before them, Tem's father stated, "This man is another of our Soqute clan. Carry him inside our tent."

"W-water..."

After drinking some water, the man lost consciousness.

"Father, these are the Kittarl clan's arrows. They must have been chasing after him!"

The dead body of Tem's father was flung back by their spears within an instant.

"Kill the Soqutian pigs and burn down their tent! And any who dares to disobey shall lose their head!

"You damn Soqutian," cried the Kittarl warrior as he killed Tem's father.

Just then, Kittarl cavalrymen rushed towards them.

"Soqutians, we are looking for a rebel. I demand you let us inspect your tent in case he's hiding inside."

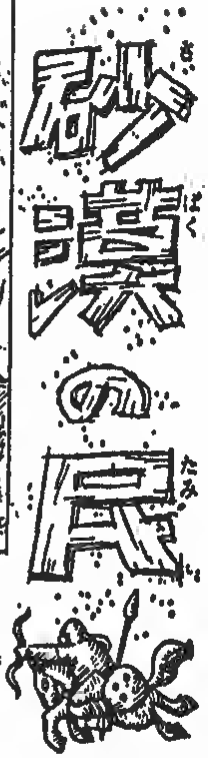
And so Tem managed to run safely back inside the tent. Outside, the Kittarl cavalrymen were shocked to see one of their fellow men killed. They realized that somone from the tent had shot the arrow.

They then shot fire arrows at the tent from afar. The tent, being made of dried sheepskin, caught on fire quickly.

As soon as Tem saw his father's corpse flung aside, he ran away as fast as he could. But he was not merely "running away." Tem was running back to his tent to grab his bow and arrow.

But the Kittarl warrior quickly chased after him. On his face was a cruel contorted smile.

Just before the Kittarl warrior's spear could reach him, Tem saw an arrow fired from the tent, flying past him. A loud scream was heard and after turning around, Tem saw that the arrow had pierced through the Kittarl warrior's neck.



Chapter 2

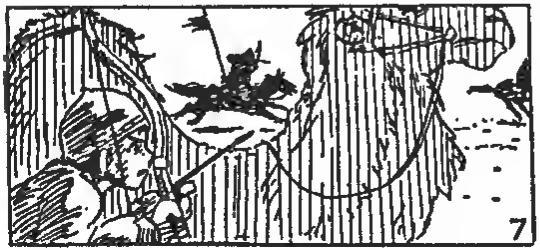
Inside the tent, the stranger from earlier put his hand on his back and told him, "When I run out of the tent, follow after me and hide yourself behind the camel."

The Kittarl captain should have waited from afar with his bow poised to fire as soon as the Soqutians ran out of the burning tent. However he was furious at the fact that one of his men had died at the hands of a mere Soqutian, and so he recklessly approached the tent. The stranger took this opportunity to rush at the captain.

The stranger unhorsed the enemy captain with his incredible strength within a blink of an eye. The other Kittarl warriors were taken aback at this sudden development

The stranger lifted the enemy captain by the back of his armour and prepared to use him as a shield.

But the captain shouted, "Do not hesitate! Fire your arrows at the rebel, even if it means having them pierce my body!"



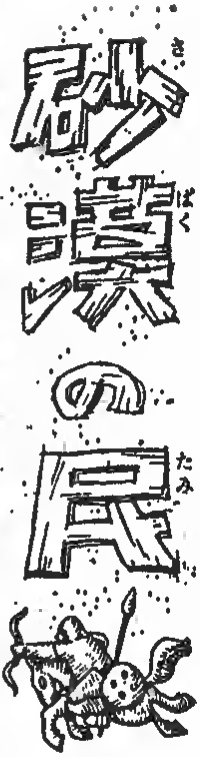
Meanwhile, Tem had hidden himself behind the camel and readied his bow. Although he felt no fear, his hands could not help but tremble.

The sheep ran past the Kittarl warriors and soon, Tem, and the stranger found themselves surrounded by sheep.

The strangest thing happened just then. The herd of sheeps, as if by some instinct, began to charge towards the direction of the fighting humans.

This was a most unusual behaviour because sheep were normally very timid animals.

At that instant, Tem noticed an insect flying around. It was a very weak-looking insect that was only found in the calm oasis and the greenery nearby. He knew that it could not have flown this far away from there, and therefore it must have been carried by the wind. He then realized the cause of the sheeps' unusual behaviour. And as if to confirm his thoughts, a loud howl was heard just then.



Chapter 3

By night the storm had stopped. The quiet starry night made the violent storm hours before seem like a faint dream.

"Father..."
Tears began to flow down Tem's face for the first time in his life as he remembered his father's death. He then felt the comforting hands of the stranger on his back.

The stranger, whose name was Kughil, told Tem that the people of his tribe had been all killed by the Kittarl.

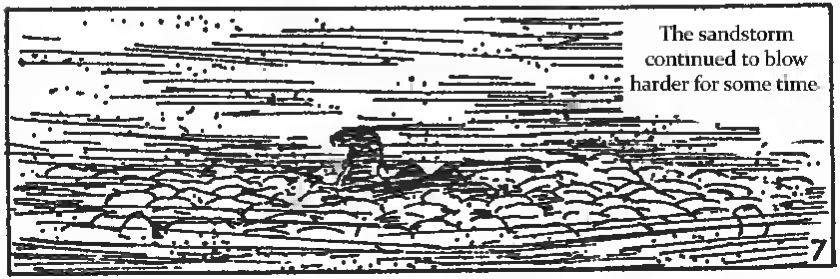
It was the howl of a sandstorm. The Kittarl warriors tried in vain to huddle together and resist the storm. They were soon blown away by the wind.

The sandstorm continued to rage, blowing sand all over and blocking out all sunlight.

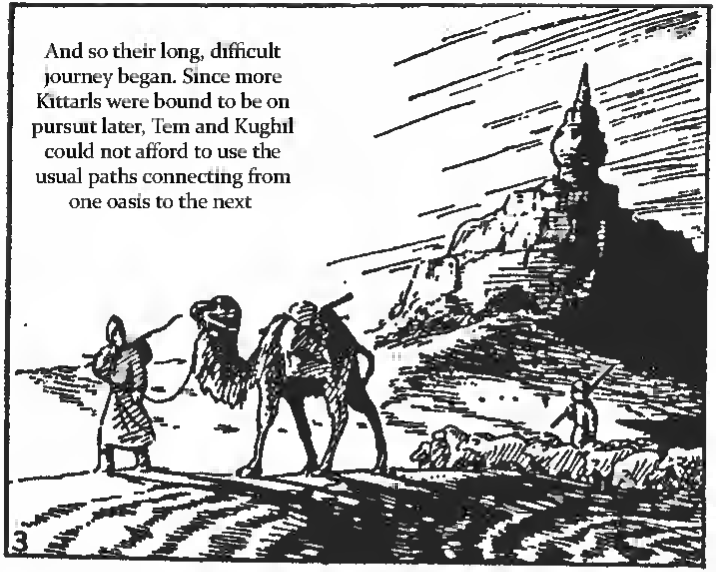
The sheep all huddled closely, with the camel at the center, to try their hardest to withstand the sandstorm as well. Tem and the stranger were trapped inside the sheepherd during this, and were able to shield themselves.

"Tem, the Soqutians are like the sand of this desert. Separate and thus powerlessly blown around by the storm. If only we could stand together to resist the storm just like these sheeps..."

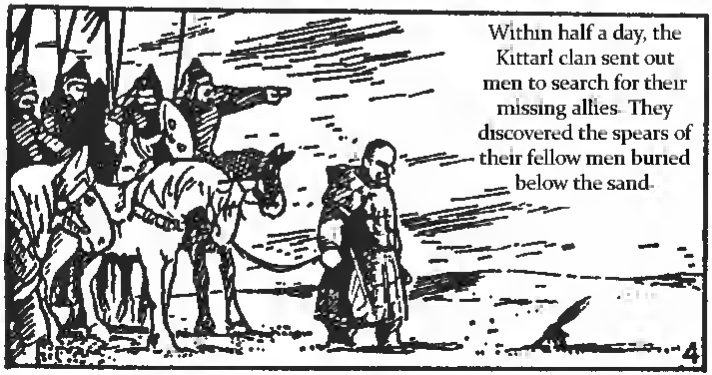
There was a look of sadness on Kughil's face.



The sandstorm continued to blow harder for some time.


And so their long, difficult journey began. Since more Kittarls were bound to be on pursuit later, Tem and Kughil could not afford to use the usual paths connecting from one oasis to the next
3

Tem had no time to grieve his father's death. The next day, Tem let the sheep graze at the oasis so they could recover their energy. Meanwhile, Kughil had killed a few sheep to create water pouches out


Within half a day, the Kittarl clan sent out men to search for their missing allies. They discovered the spears of their fellow men buried below the sand.
4

"This will be a tough journey."

"I don't mind as long as it's for the sake of defeating the Kittarls."

"You're a brave boy I'm sure you'll grow up to be a wonderful man.

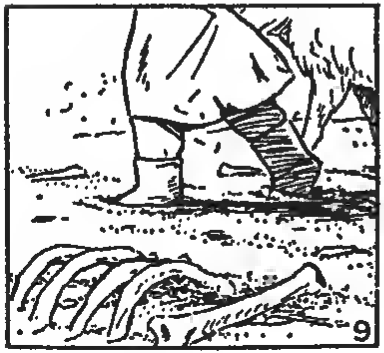
砂漠の民

Chapter 4

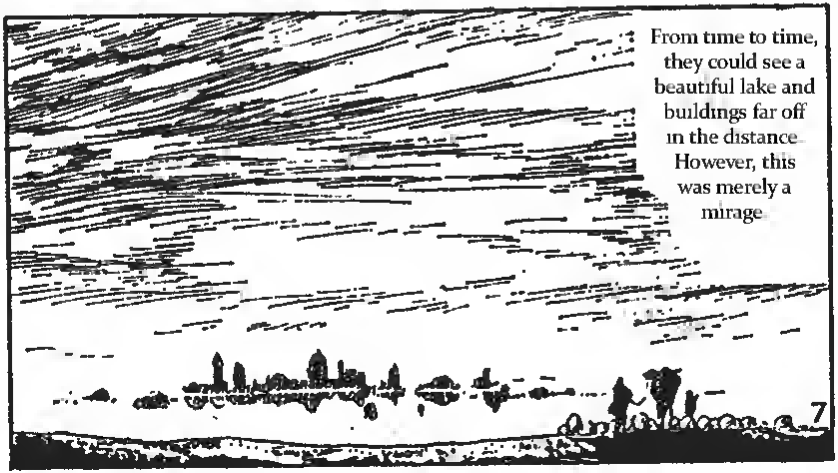
In the morning, several sheep had died of dehydration. For Tem who had been herding sheep all his life, it was a painful sight.

"We must get going now," said Kughil sternly behind him.

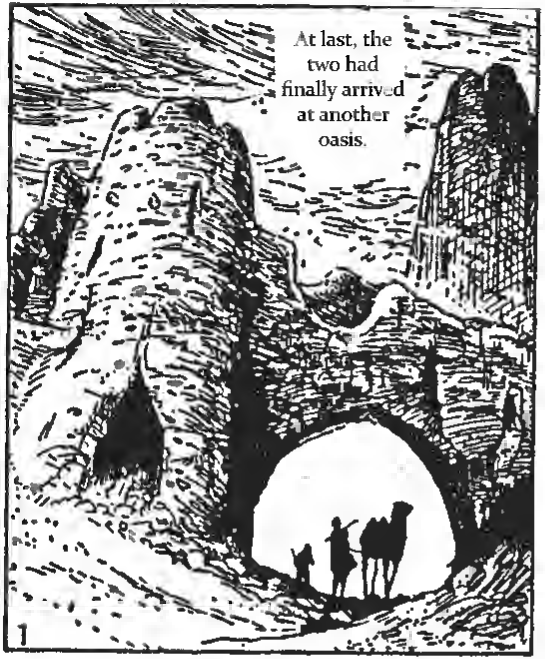
The road that Kughil had picked out was one that caravans had used long long ago. The days of their journey were scorching and the nights were freezing. This desert was known by the Soqutians as the "Desert of Starvation" for it was devoid of water and food.



The two continued their journey silently. The desert, on which camel skeletons could be found here and there, stretched endlessly beyond the horizon.

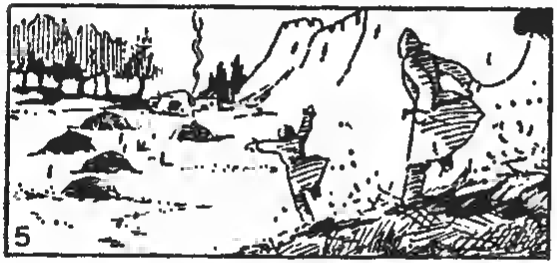


From time to time, they could see a beautiful lake and buildings far off in the distance. However, this was merely a mirage.



砂漠の民

Chapter 5



It was unmistakably a group of Soqutian tents that stood before them. Tem and Kughil quickly ran towards it with joy.

The Soqutian village was eerily quiet. Some of the villagers peeked out from their tents to see who were outside.

"What's wrong, Kughil?"

"They must be frightened of us," Kughil replied.

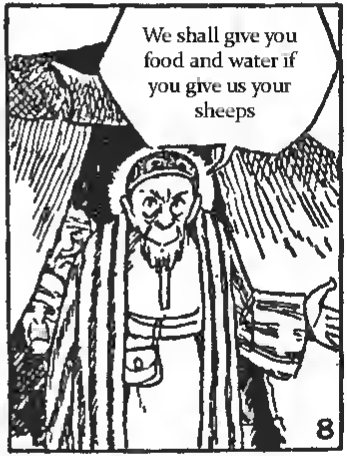
Tem had also heard before that the Soqutians of Kallahon were wiped out by the Kittarl clan long ago.

"Where are you two headed to?" a young village girl asked.

"To Pejite."

There was a glint in the girl's eye when she heard that

"We are fellow Soqutians. It is of our proud tradition to lend a helping hand to people of our own kind. I kindly ask for some food and water"



A single old man came out from his tent and stated that he was the chief of this small town. He then said to them, "Our village only has 10 sheeps left. If you give us a few of your sheep, we shall give you as much food and water you need.

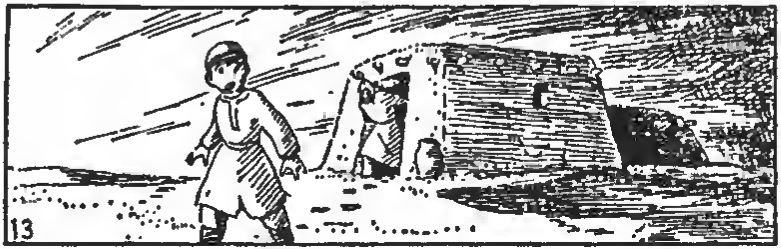
After agreeing to the deal, they received their food and water. It was a humble meal consisting only of salted bread but Tem and Kughil hungrily devoured it nonetheless.

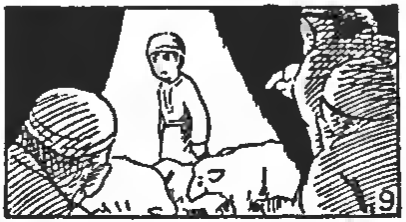
As the day grew dark, the two were led inside a small house made from mud and clay to spend the night

"Kughil, there's something strange about this village. They act so aloof towards us even though we're fellow Soqutians."

"Yes, something is off. But let us worry later and sleep for now."

When morning came, Tem stepped outside from the mud house to a big surprise. Both the village and his herd of sheep had vanished



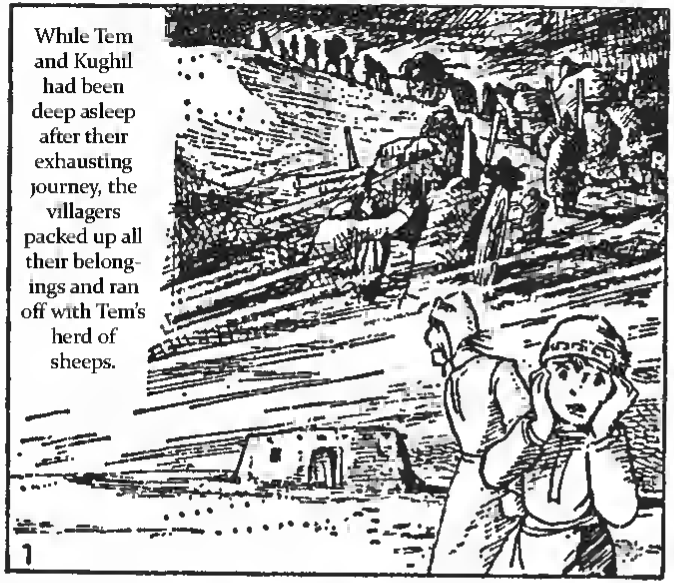


"Look, they have a herd of sheeps," whispered the other villagers hiding inside their tents.

砂漠の民

Chapter 6

While Tem and Kughil had been deep asleep after their exhausting journey, the villagers packed up all their belongings and ran off with Tem's herd of sheeps.



"I'm not going let those thieves get away! I'll chase after them!"

"Stop it, it'll be futile!"

"If it were so easy for us to track them down, they would not have bothered to take the elderly and young for it'd slow them down. Moreover, the wind will have hidden their tracks by now"

Tem's father had even risked his life to protect the life of a fellow Soqutian to honour the proud Soqutian tradition.

For Tem, being betrayed by fellow Soqutians was just too much.

Just then, a sound was heard from one of the tents left behind. It was the village girl who spoke to him last night. Tem immediately sprang upon her as soon as he saw her.

The girl was an orphan named Sasan. She stated that even if she had gone with the other villagers, she would have eventually been sold off as a slave in exchange for food.

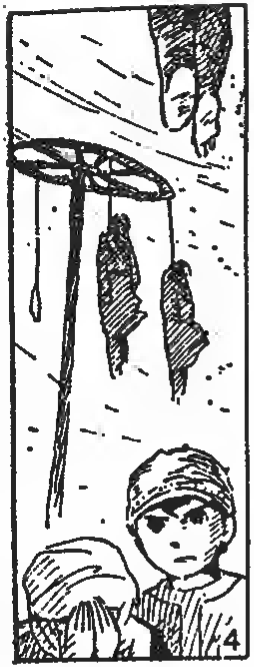
"It was the Kittarls who drove them to the point of stealing from fellow Soqutians. And yet they still left our camel so we would not die. Remember this well, Tem. The Soqutians have not completely abandoned their ways yet."

Kughil calmed Tem down and asked the girl what happened. "Please forgive the villagers. After losing many people and livestock to the cruel Kittarls, our lives have been much too harsh."

"Then why didn't you people take our camel too?"

"We may be poor but we have no intention of leaving a fellow Soqutian with nothing in this vast desert."

"Long ago, the Soqutians of this specific region were brave warriors. Even when the capital of Soqute did not send any reinforcements to fend off the invading Kittarls, the people here continued to fight believing that help would surely arrive one day. But now, they are so destitute and famished that they must even stoop to stealing sheeps to survive."

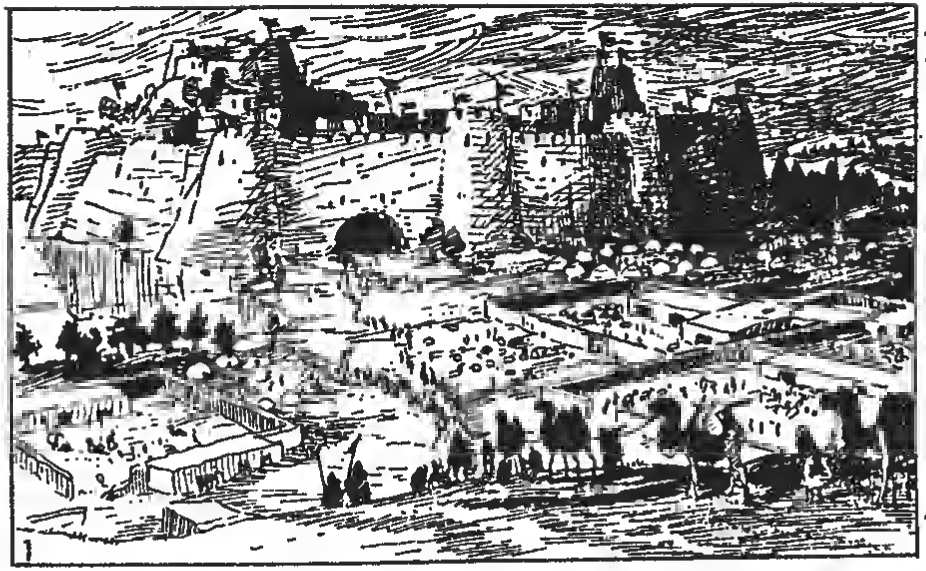


Outside the city walls were people who were hanged for rebelling against the Kittarls.

"Don't worry, Sasan. I'm sure we'll find your brother safe and sound."

The capital Pejite, once a thriving city full of life and vigour, was now under the rule of Kittarls.

None of its former glory nor peaceful scenery could be seen.



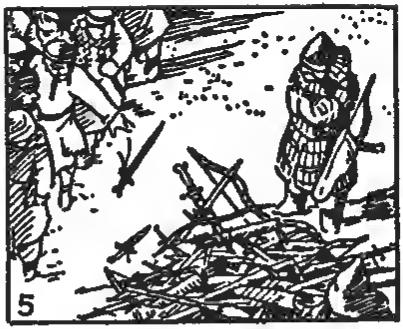
To the south of Pejite was Kucchin. It was the last Soqutian city free from the Kittarl clan's subjugation.

The Kittarl clan had been amassing troops and supplies in Pejite to conquer this city.

第七話 滅びの兵

Chapter 7

"It's only a knife used for cooking and eating," Tem replied. But talking was useless against the Kittarls. The guards sheathed their swords and were about to kill Tem and Kughil. All of a sudden, someone shouted, "Someone, please stop my camel! It's gone wild!!!"



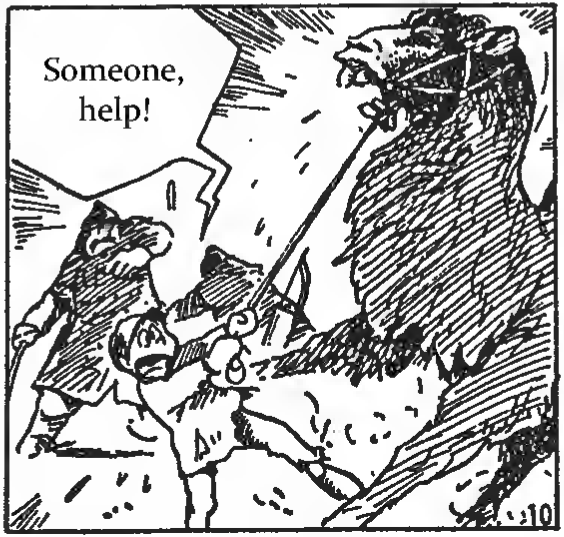
Before any travellers could enter the city, the Kittarls confiscated any weapons that the travellers might be carrying.

"Halt!"

A Kittarl guard stopped Tem as he tried to enter the city.

"I'm terribly sorry. I was careless and accidentally lost hold of my camel," said the boy. The Kittarl guards replied, "Hmph, just be more careful next time!"

When the guards turned around from the camel, they realized that the two kids and the man from before had escaped.



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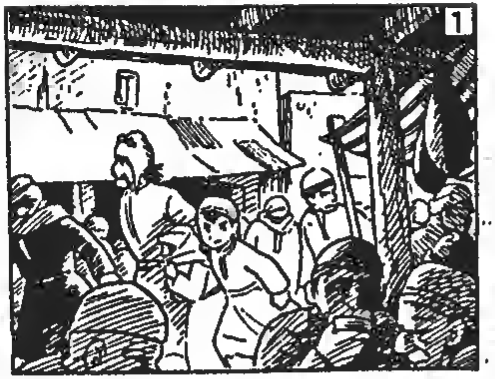
Chapter 8

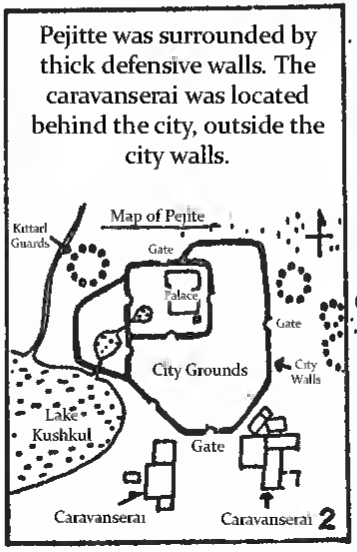


The three of them were led by two men to a caravanserai.

"It's alright, you can trust us and the other men here."

"Shin!? The one-eyed Shin, is that really you!?"

"Yes captain, it's me. I'm glad to see that you've survived. The rest of us are doing fine too."



Kughil's old comrade had gathered all around and poured them green tea

"This boy here is Tahn. He's the one who let that camel run wild so you three could safely escape."

It was the dagger that the Kittarl guards had taken away from Tem

The three were surrounded by the warm and friendly hospitality of Kughil's old comrades
Tem thought to himself, "To think that we still had such wonderful comrades left..."
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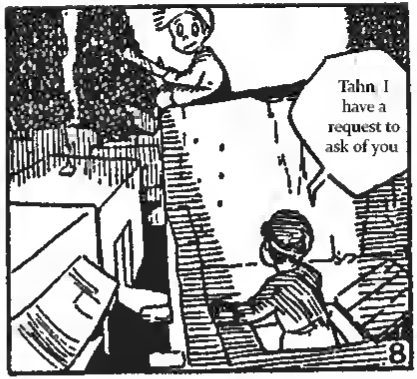
A certain entrance in the Western side of Pejite was known as the "Gates of Death," for an old abandoned prison was located here

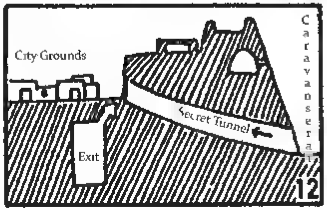


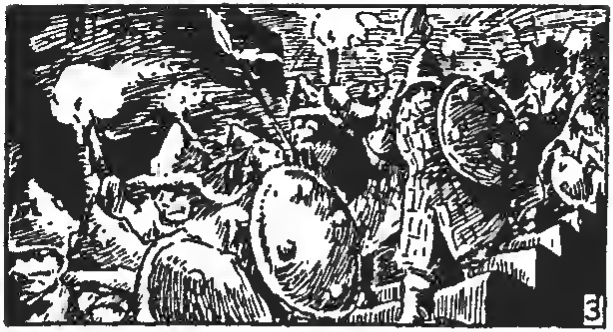
When the adults started discussing confidential matters, Tahn went up to the roof.

"My brother should be somewhere inside Pejite."

"I'd advise against looking for him. The city grounds are teeming with Kittarl spies and guards."

This is the hole my grandpa dug up. Unfortunately he died before he could escape. But my old man finished digging the tunnel.
15

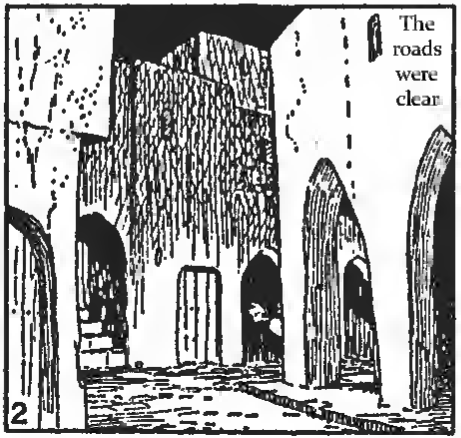




They could see Kittarl soldiers heading down from above the castle walls. The three children frantically ran away to hide themselves.

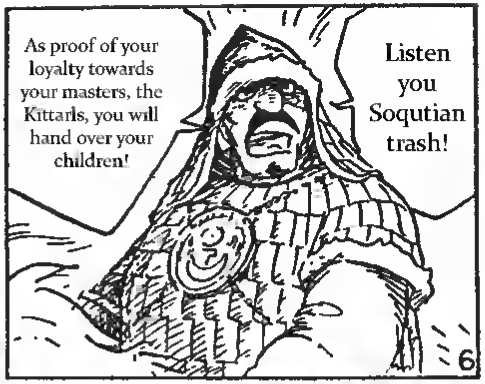
The tunnel exit was located inside an abandoned mill

"Let me show you who knows this city best. I may be a thief but you can trust me."



砂漠の民

Chapter 9



The Kittarl soldiers shouted to the citizens inside the houses, "**Wake up!**"

"Any resistance and consider your lives forfeit!"

The terrified cries of both children and their families filled the night sky.

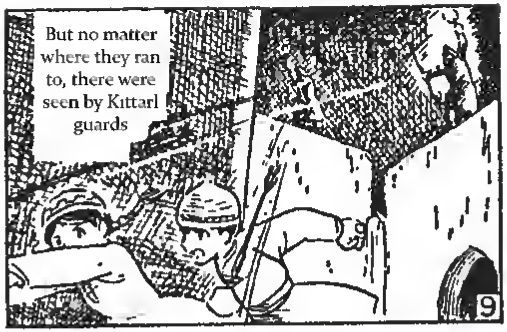
The boys were shocked to see a Kittarl soldier who was grabbing onto Sasan by the braids of her hair. The soldier forced them back down the stairs by the tip of his sword.

Tahn tried throwing his dagger at the Kittarl soldier but it was of no use. Just then, Sasan did something completely outrageous.

"I know you're trying to let us escape safely but I won't let only yourself to be caught!"

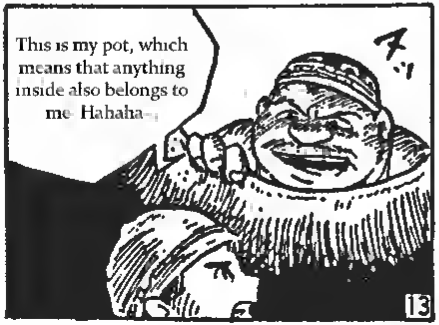
Shouting this, Tem jumped down the building too.

Completely worn out from all the running, the two decided to hide themselves inside a giant pot standing in some isolate spot.



Tem had embarassingly fainted from the fear and shock of falling. But Sasan, whom Tem had thought of as a crybaby, was fine and helped him back up.

To think that Sasan would be fine when even the Kittarl guard and I were knocked out after falling from that height



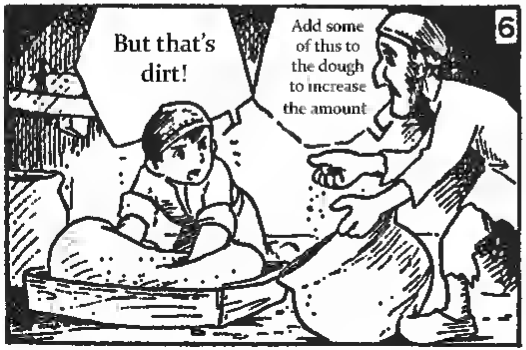
Because they were new to the town, the two had no idea where to run off to. And so they ran to some small quiet street where there was no one.

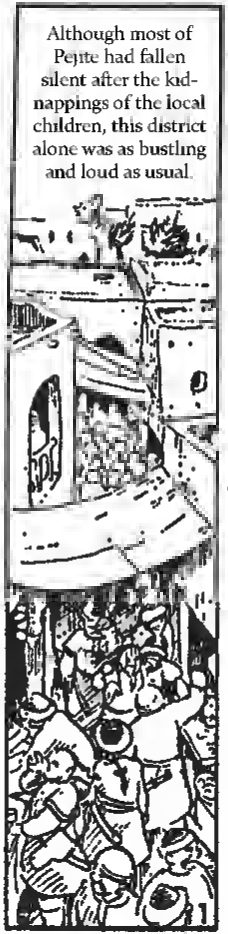
5
Soqutian bread is baked until hard, similar to rice crackers

Is the food still not done yet?
2

I want no dilly dallying! Keep on working!
3
Good you're back

And after you're finished with that help out with the bread-making!
4

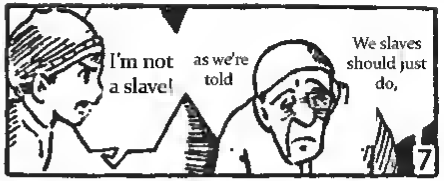

But that's dirt!
Add some of this to the dough to increase the amount
6

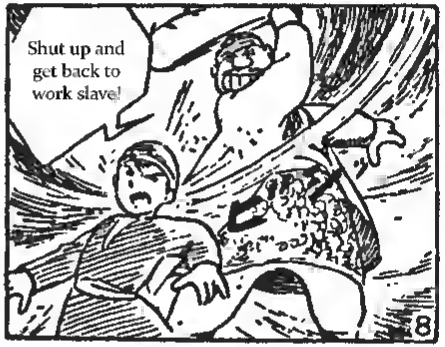

Although most of Pejite had fallen silent after the kidnappings of the local children, this district alone was as bustling and loud as usual.
1

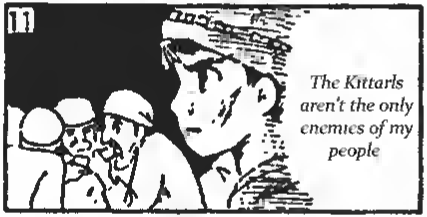
砂漠の民

Chapter 11

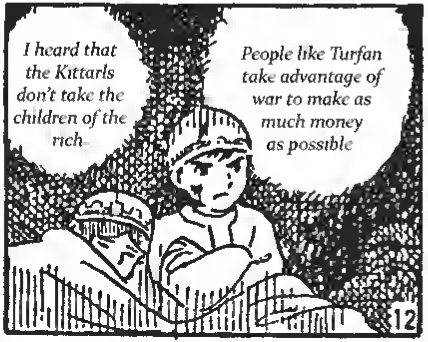
A good chance for Tem and Sasan to escape did not come soon for the streets were constantly filled with Kittarl soldiers gathering for a future battle



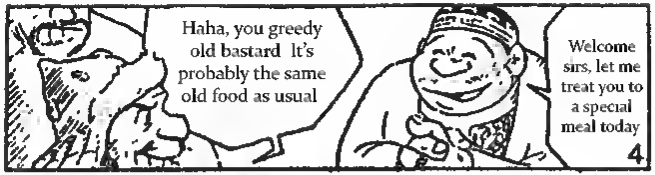




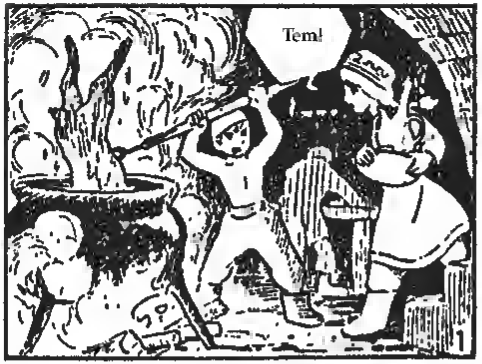
The leader of the rebels is a man named Kughil. They've been stocking up on weapons for a rebellion. They're planning to attack at night tomorrow.
This is an incredibly crucial piece of information. He must be selling it for a high price...
15


I heard that the Kittarls don't take the children of the rich.
People like Turfan take advantage of war to make as much money as possible
12

Because the breadmaker Turfan was in league with the Kittarls and had taken monopoly of selling bread, the people had no choice but to buy his bread made of dirt and flour.

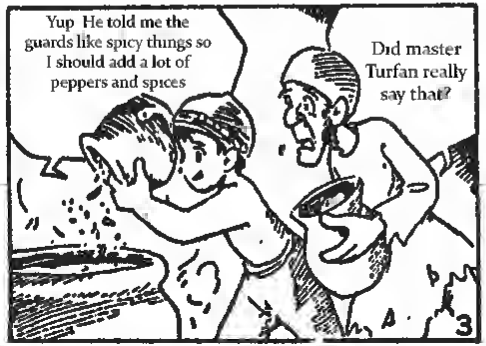


Tufan's shop was often visited by the Kittarl soldiers.

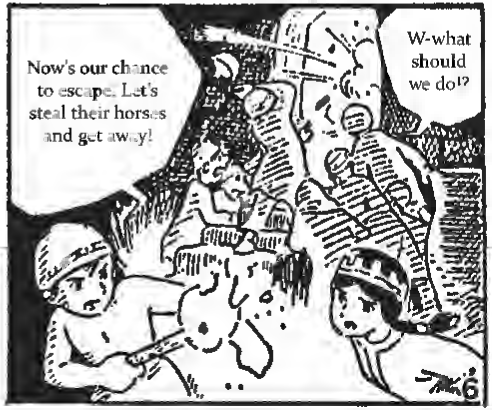


"If we don't do something, they'll all be killed!"

"So there's a spy among them, huh..."



But the soldiers were in for a shock After eating the extremely spicy food, they became angry and began to run wild in the shop



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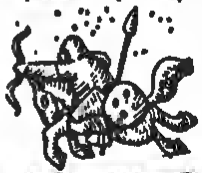
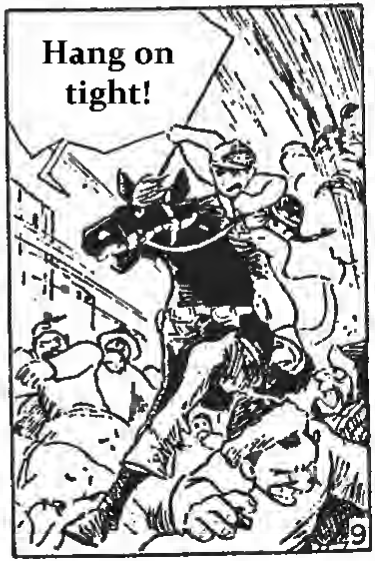
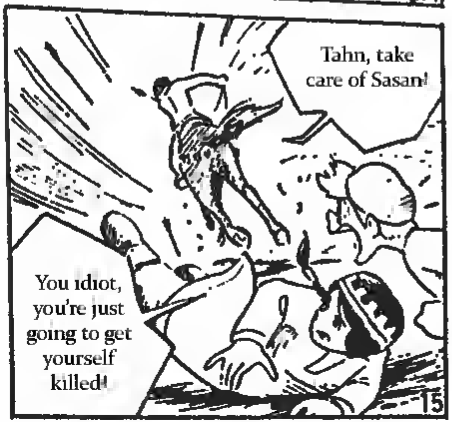


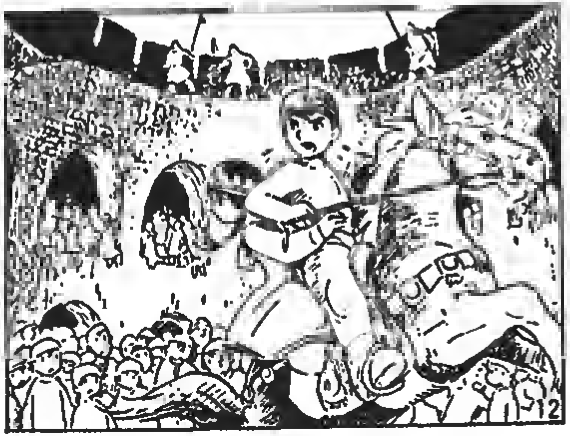
Chapter 12

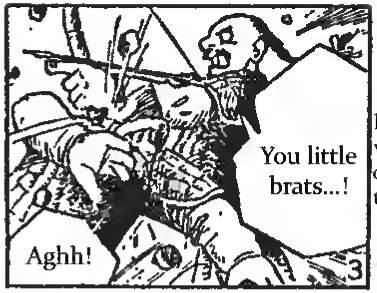
"If we head straight from here, we should reach the city walls."





The two found themselves inside the prison camp where the soldiers had taken the local kids

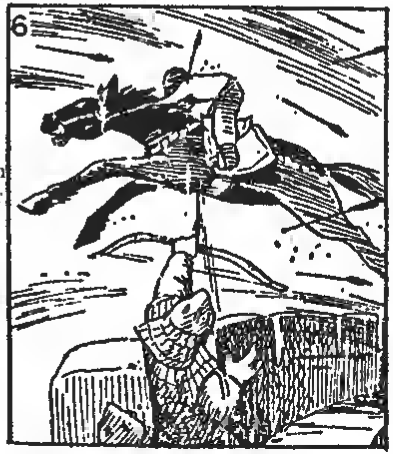


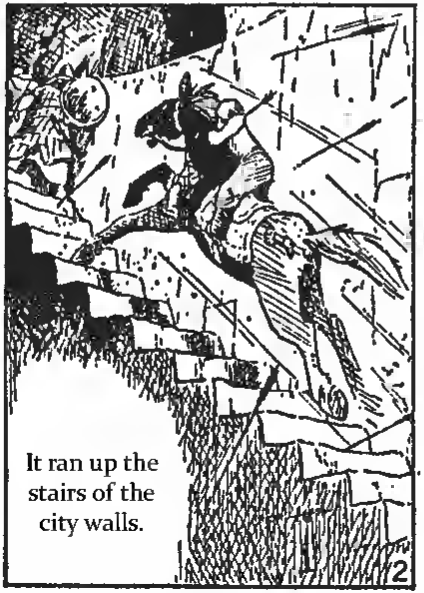


The Kittarl horse Tem was riding on dodged the arrows and ran frighteningly fast.

The kids distracted the guards away from Tem by throwing rocks.

Tem's horse then leapt over the walls and into Lake Kushkul.





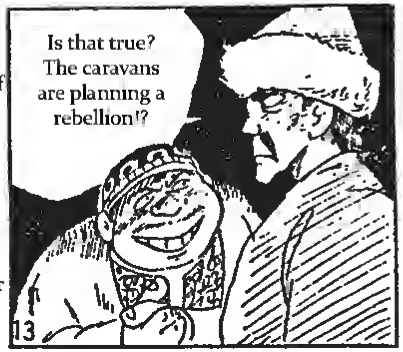
It ran up the stairs of the city walls.

Turfan was being interrogated by the captain of the Kittarl guards.

"Your slaves not only started a fire but also stole my men's horse. The actions of slaves will be held accountable for by their master."

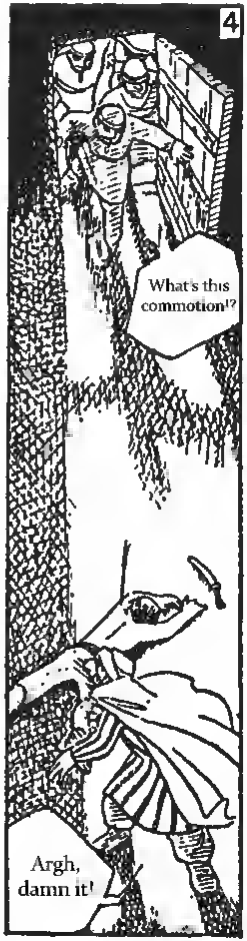
"Yes. I don't know the specifics myself but an informant of mine among their ranks told this to me."

"Alright, I'll look over the fire and the stolen horse for this information."



The kids began crying as hard as they could.

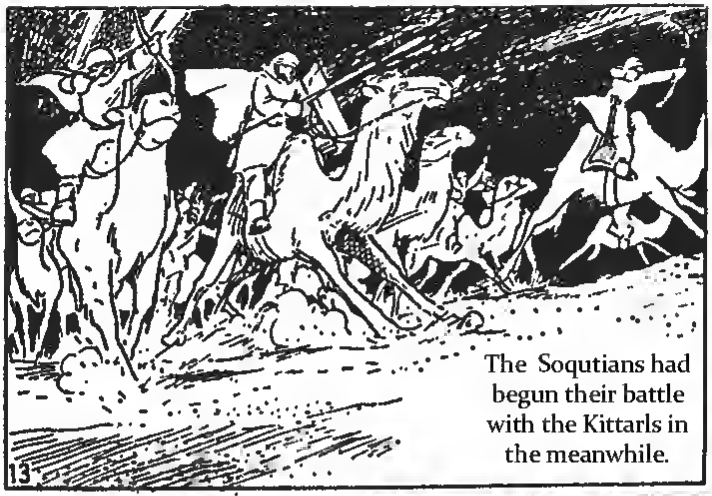
The rebels changed their plans to deal with the enemies lying in wait outside



The situation was dire

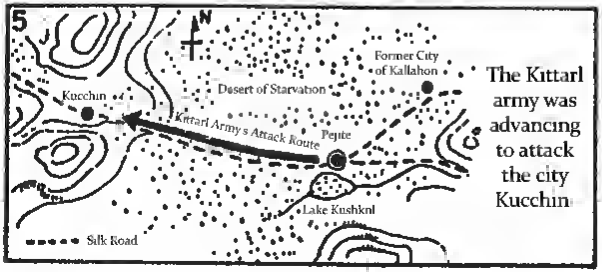
"I have to tell them that there's a spy among them!"

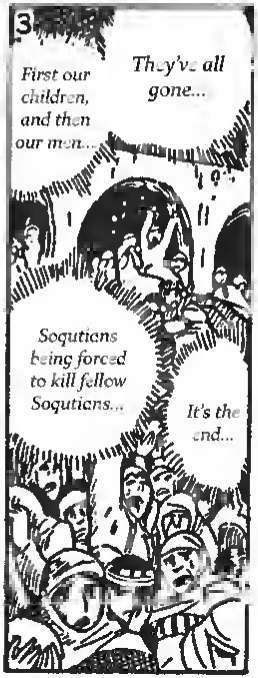
The spy tried to strangle Tem but ended up cutting his arm by the Kittarl arrow that was sticking out of Tem's shoulder



Tem was carried off on an old man's cart.

"If it wasn't for this injured arm... But I still have to do something to save Tahn, Sasan and the other children..."





On the day of the battle, the skies were filled with the cries of women. All men from the ages 15 to 60 were forcibly recruited into the Kittarl army.

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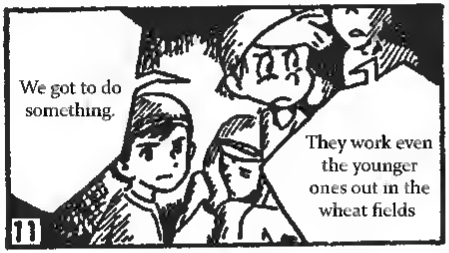
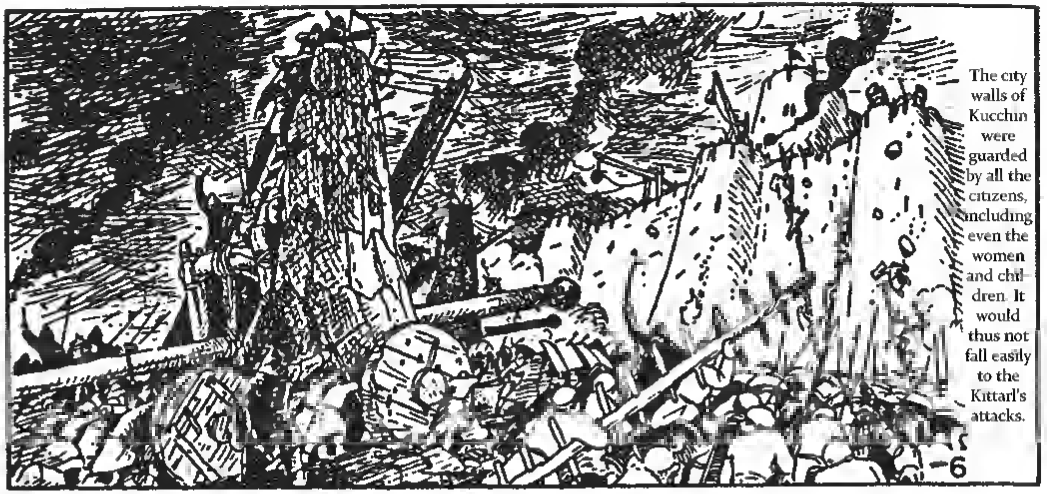
Chapter 15

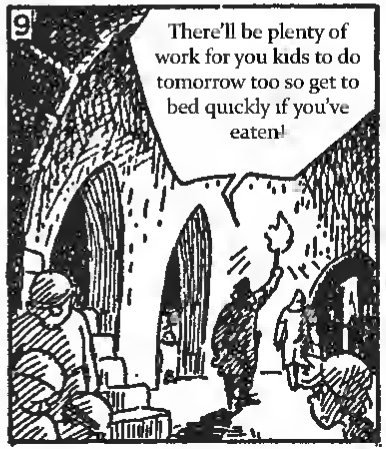
Sing us a song, sis
There, there, don't cry. Soqutian boys should be brave.
10


We got to do something.
They work even the younger ones out in the wheat fields
11

We're going to all escape from here.
12

What, you're crazy!
We'll all be killed!
Just hear me out
13

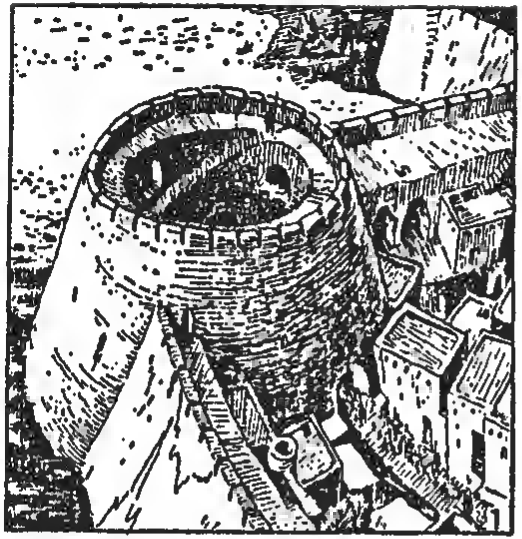

The city walls of Kucchin were guarded by all the citizens, including even the women and children. It would thus not fall easily to the Kittarl's attacks.
6


9
There'll be plenty of work for you kids to do tomorrow too so get to bed quickly if you've eaten!

We'll kill all of you if even one escapes!
301, 302, 303.
Alright, line up!
Pejite
7

Ssh!
Tem!
Huh, there's one too many! Did I count wrong?
8

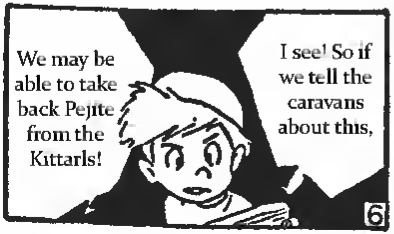
When morning came, the children were all forced to work outside in the fields.



"It's just as Tem said. There are less soldiers in Pejite with each day."

The Kittarls hated to do such menial labour and would rather fight wars to steal wheat and other crops from people of other tribes and clans
4

They also counted the numbers of Kittarl soldiers and their camps.



The kids began carefully observing the Kittarl soldiers' movements.

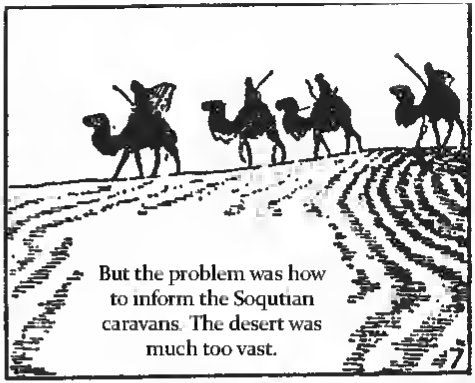
第十六話 タミ

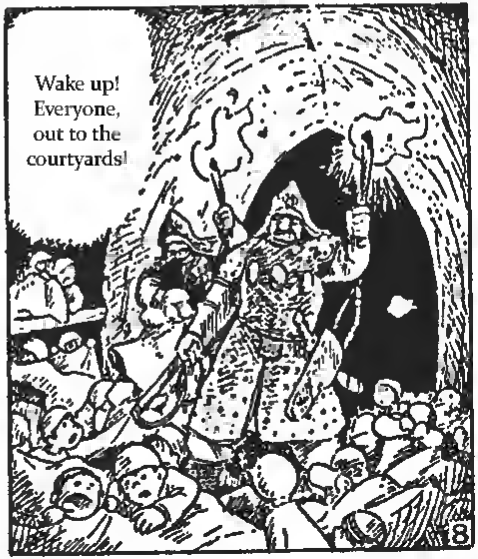
Chapter 16

The children's teeth chattered against the cold night wind.

"I want the 50 biggest and oldest boys to go outside," ordered the Kittarl soldiers

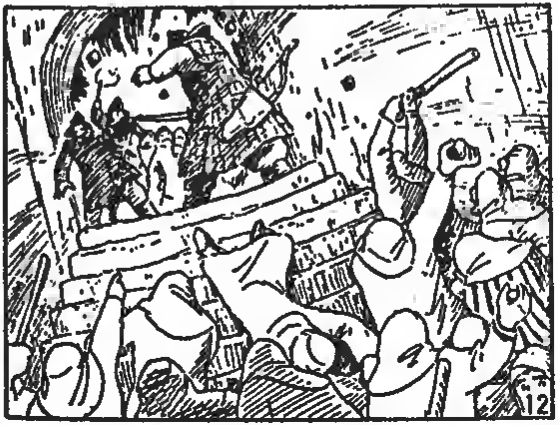
The children were scared and confused as to what was going on





One swing from the Kittarl soldier's sword finally broke the Soqutian women's patience. They threw away their fears and struck back

"Give back our children, you beasts!"

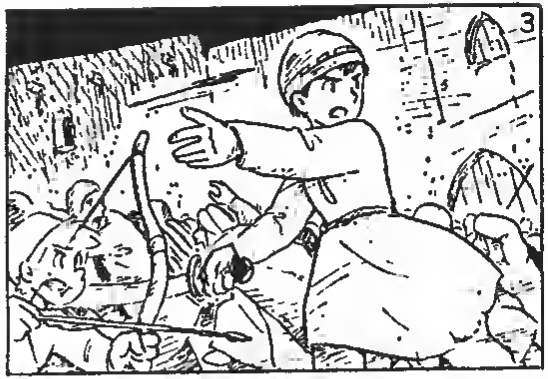


Hearing the loud commotion, the women of Pejite gathered around to see what was going on.

"What're you going to do with our children!?"

"Return our children!"

Kittarl reinforcements soon came to suppress the riot.



The women and children were driven back into a small alley.

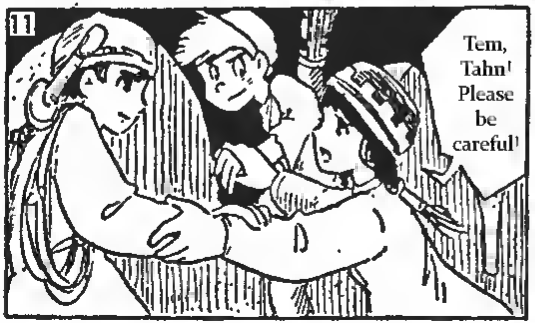
Tem shouted, "Everyone, back into prison camp! We must barricade ourselves inside!"

The women closed and barricaded the gates to block the incoming Kittarl soldiers.

"The remainder of you, go above the stairs and throw the rocks at the soldiers down below!"

Everyone was obediently following Tem's commands

"We'll sneak out of here and seek help from nearby Soqutian caravans. Please do your best to hold out until then."



But the Soqutian women valiantly fought and were able to repel all the attacking Kittarl soldiers.

Facing failure, the Kittarls thought up of a plan to wait until the rebels starved for they knew that there weren't enough food supplies within the prison camp.

The gates had been completely barricaded.

"If it's come to this, we won't hold back," shouted the Kittarl guards. They launched a full-on assault on the prison camp.

There were many small countries located nearby the oasises of the desrt. Soqute was one of these countries as well.

The people of these countries all grew many crops and formed many caravans to sell their goods.

Just why did the Kitarls attack the small country of Soqute centered around an oasis?

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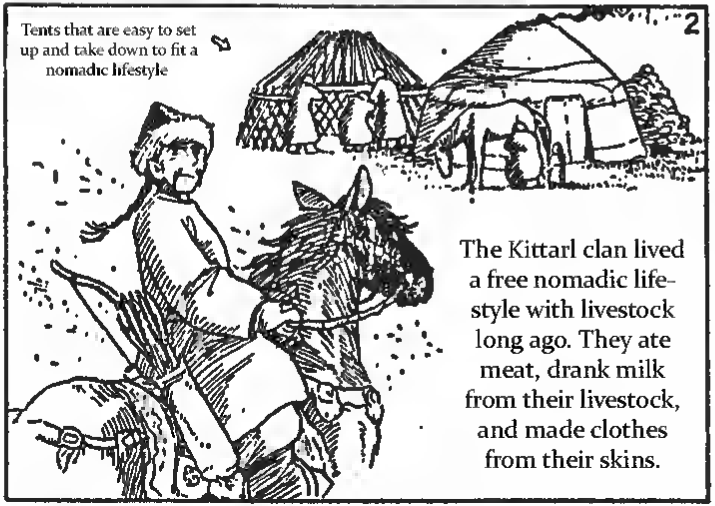
Chapter 18

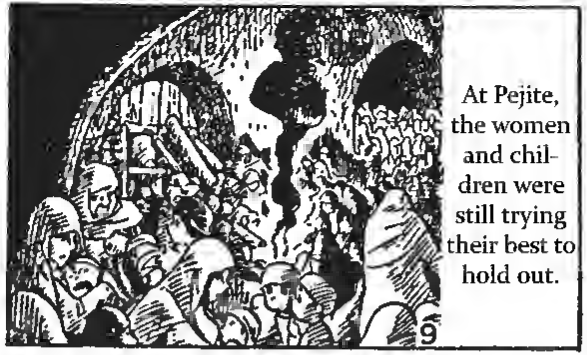
Silk road was the name of the most famous trade route that runs across Central Asia. Many rare and expensive goods such as silk could be found on it. The Kittarls wanted to control this trade route for it would provide them with everything they needed or wanted.

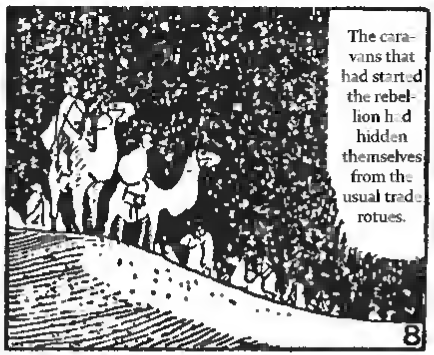
Man and Camel travelling through Central Asia



The Kittarl clan lived a free nomadic life-style with livestock long ago. They ate meat, drank milk from their livestock, and made clothes from their skins.

With a strong and poweful leader as king, the Kittarls began to conquer the oasis nations of Central Asia.

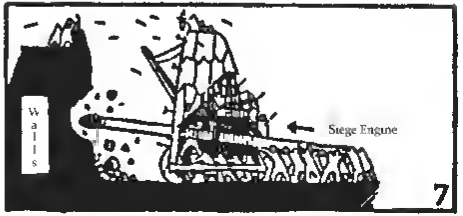




Nearly all of Soqute was conquered by the Kittarls. And even the last free Soqutian city of Kucchin was now being attacked by the Kittarls and ironically, by fellow Soqutians.

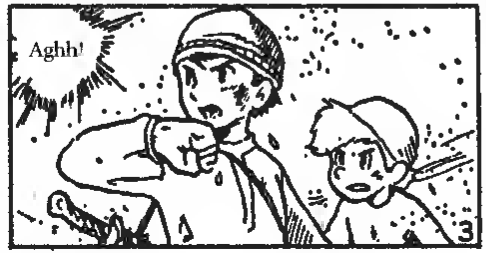
During all of this, two boys were making their way across the Desert of Starvation to seek help.

Some of the Kittarl soldiers threw bread inside the prison camp. But within moments later, they fired an arrow to the exact same spot.



The people of the desert had well developed eyesights to cope with the environment.

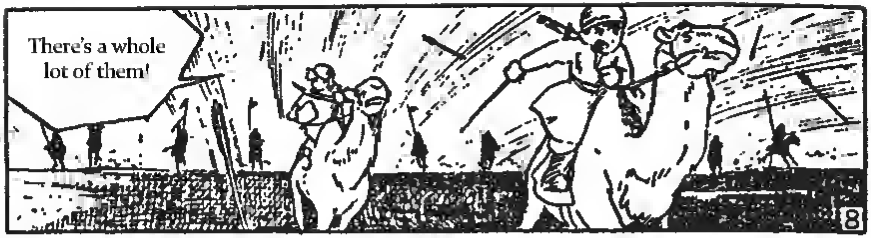
Both the children and camels drank as much as they could



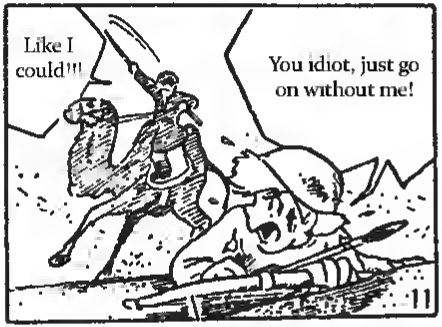
砂漠の民

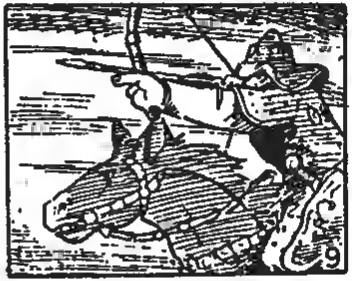
Chapter 19

Tem faced head on to the charging Kittarl warrior.

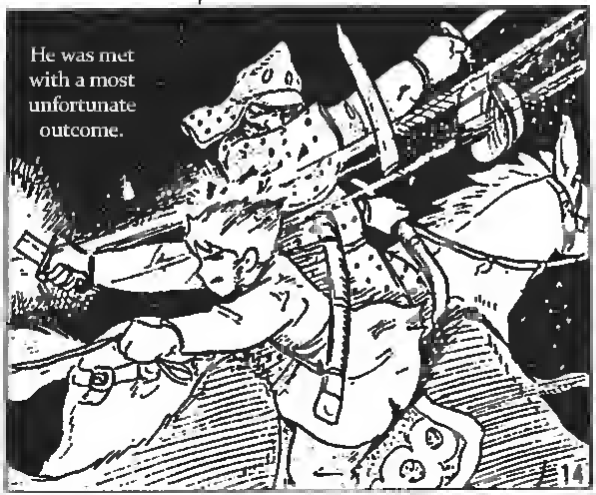


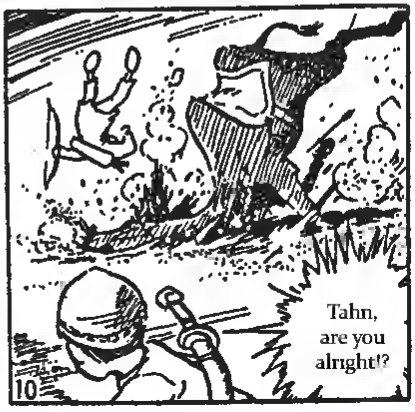
His life flashed before his eyes.

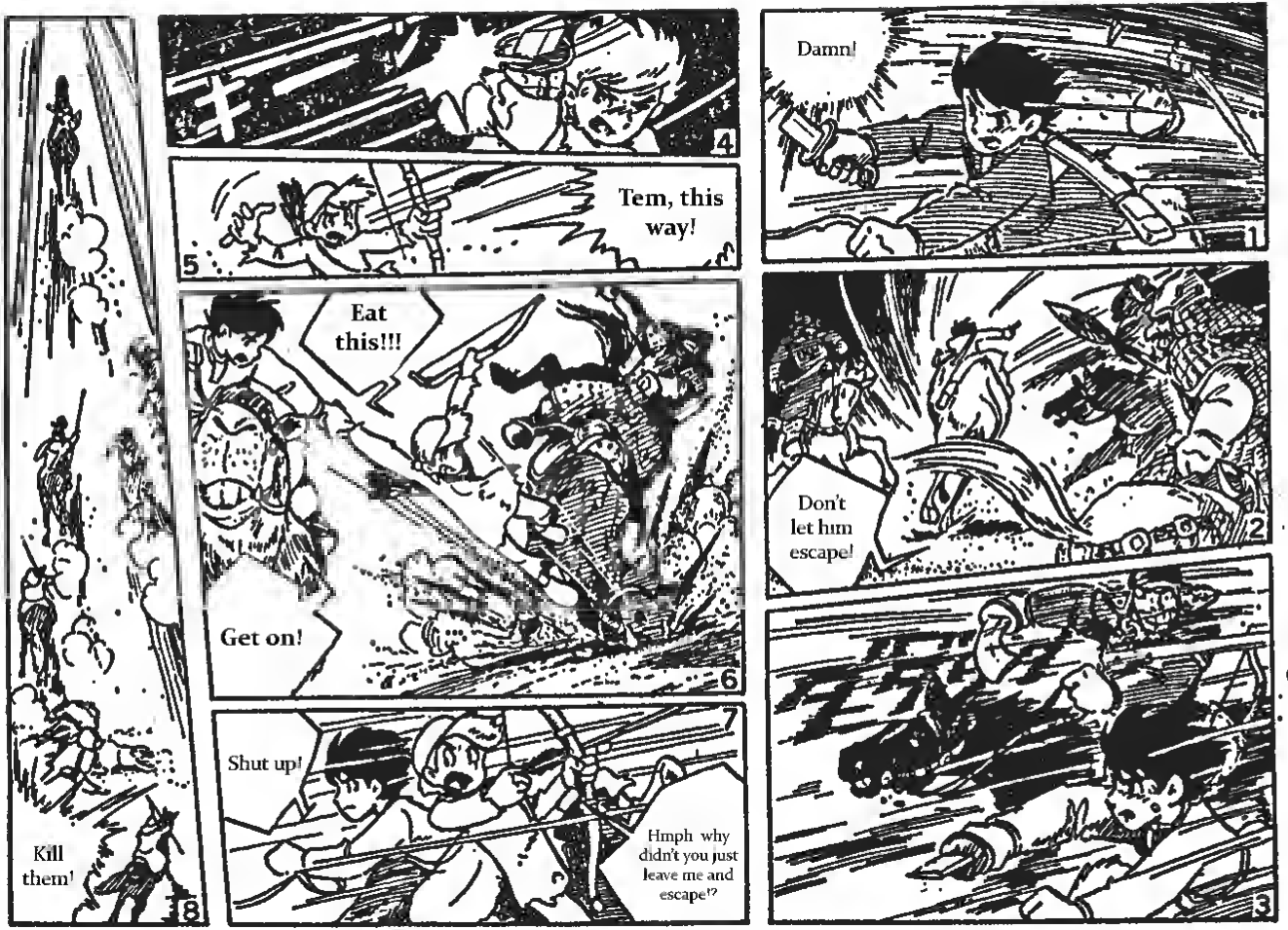




Their camels were tired and on top of that, the Kittarls were very skilled with the bow and arrow.

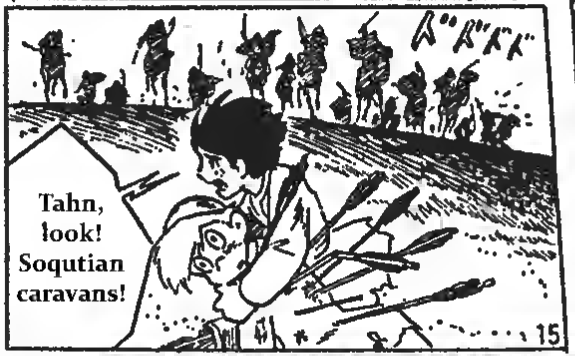


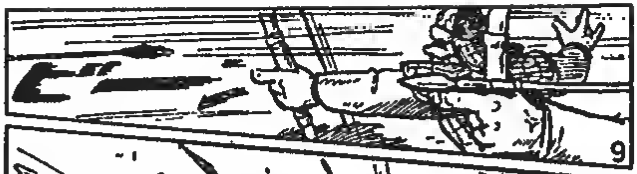




砂漠の民

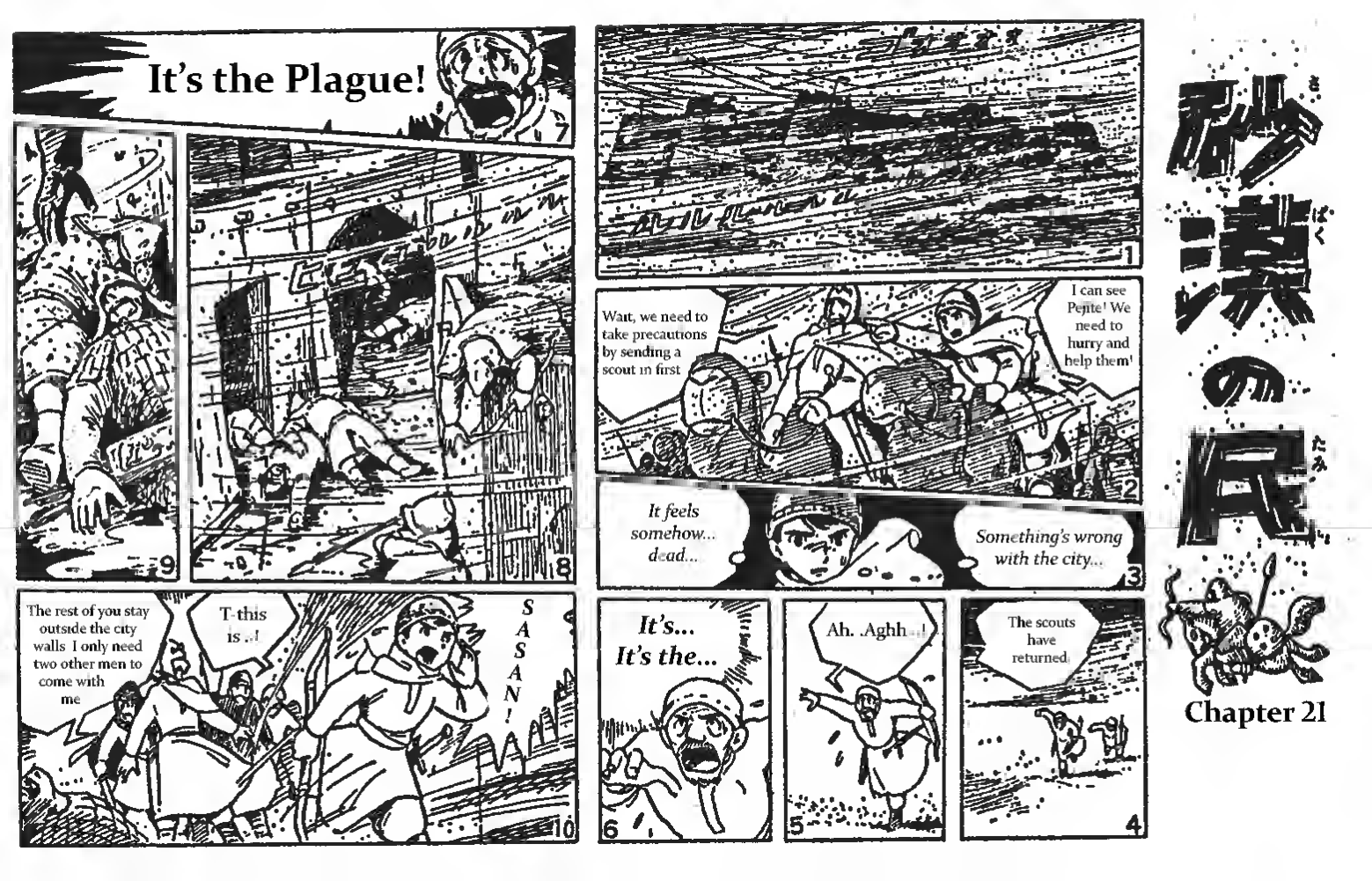
Chapter 20





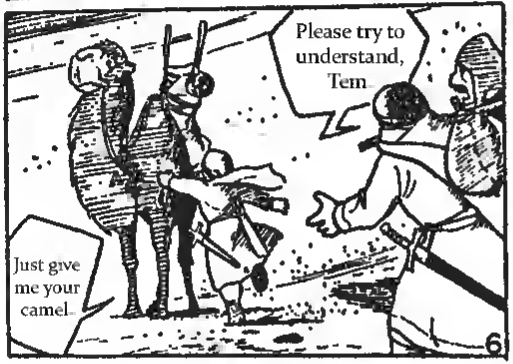
Compared to the Kittarl horses used to running on grassy plains, Tem's camel steadily widened the gap

Although the two boys had fulfilled their mission of contacting Soqutian caravans, it came at the price of the life of Tem's dearest friend.


It's the Plague!
7
9
8
1
Wait, we need to take precautions by sending a scout in first
I can see Pejite! We need to hurry and help them!
2
It feels somehow... dead...
Something's wrong with the city...
3
The rest of you stay outside the city walls I only need two other men to come with me
T-this is ..!
SASAN!
10
It's... It's the...
6
Ah. .Aghh ..!
5
The scouts have returned
4
砂漠の民
Chapter 21

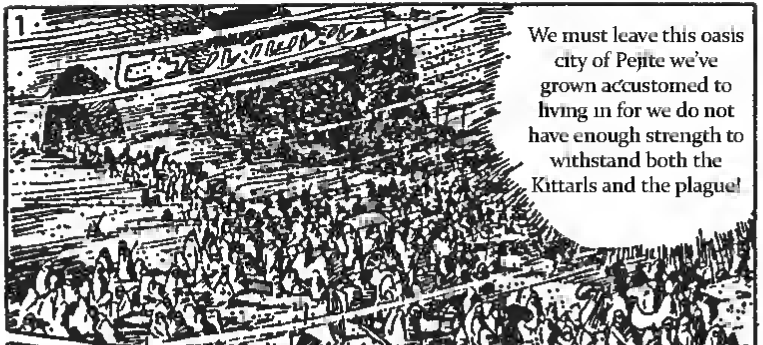
Ah...!
16
Corpses lying all around... And the stench...!
Tem continued to stagger around the dead, looking for Sasan.
Tem...
17
S-She's so cold...
Hang in there, Sasan! The caravans have finally come to help up!
18
It looks like the plague spread inside the prison camp too.
15
Sasan, where are you!?
14
You'll all be safe now. Are there any sick among you?
We've got bread and milk!
13
12
11
It's us! We've come to help! Open up!
Open up!!!

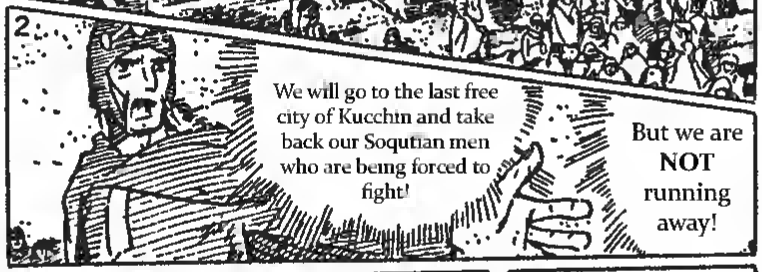
I'll hit you if you interfere!
Don't come near!
5

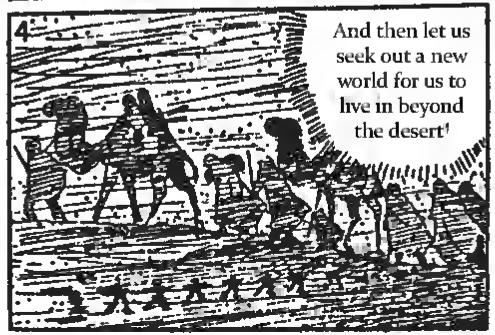

Please try to understand, Tem.
Just give me your camel.
6

Mnn...
I'm sorry but—

But don't worry, I'll carry you all the way to Kucchin by my arms!
Sasan, there just aren't enough camels to go around.
8

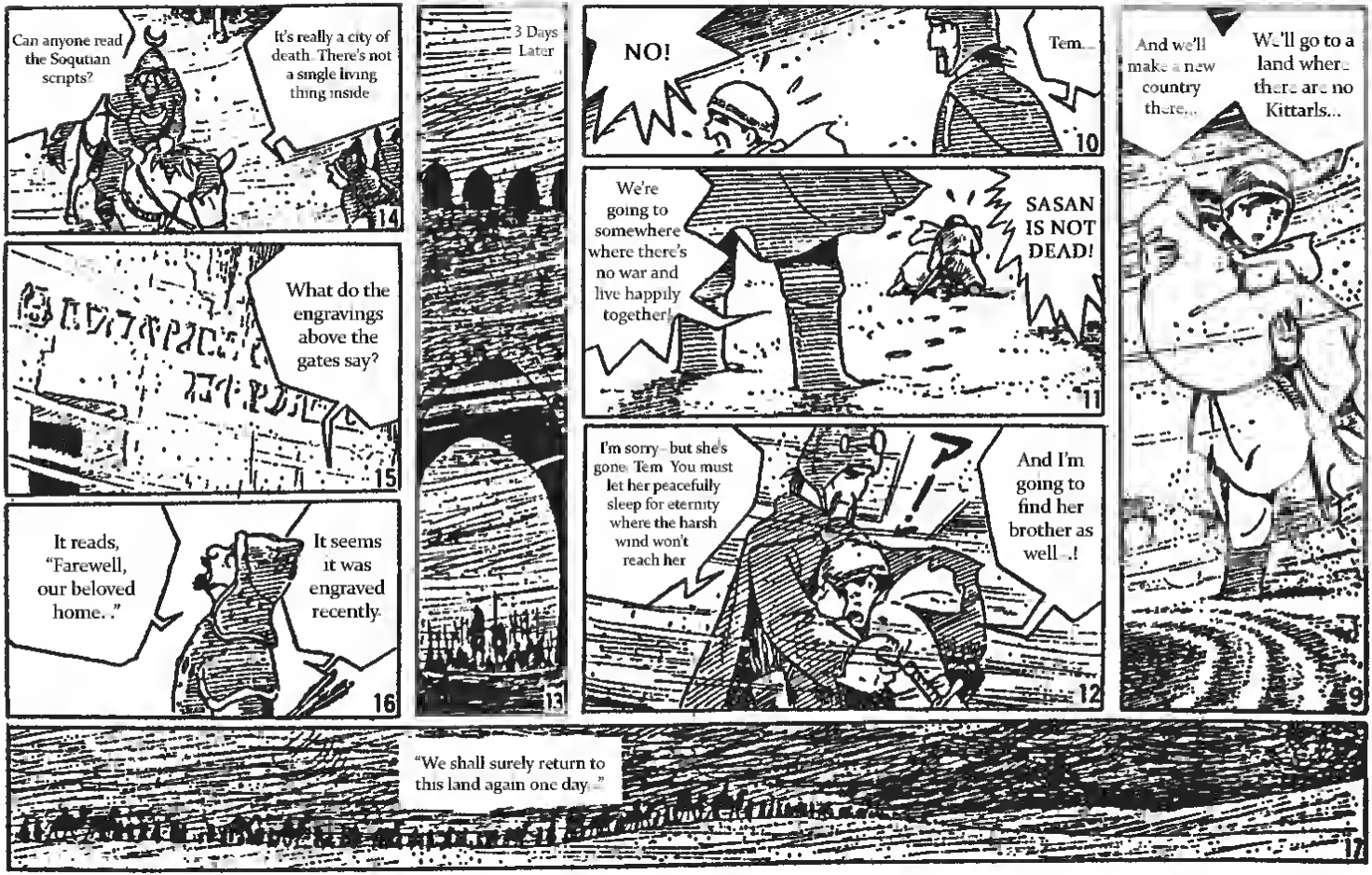

1
We must leave this oasis city of Pejite we've grown accustomed to living in for we do not have enough strength to withstand both the Kittarls and the plague!

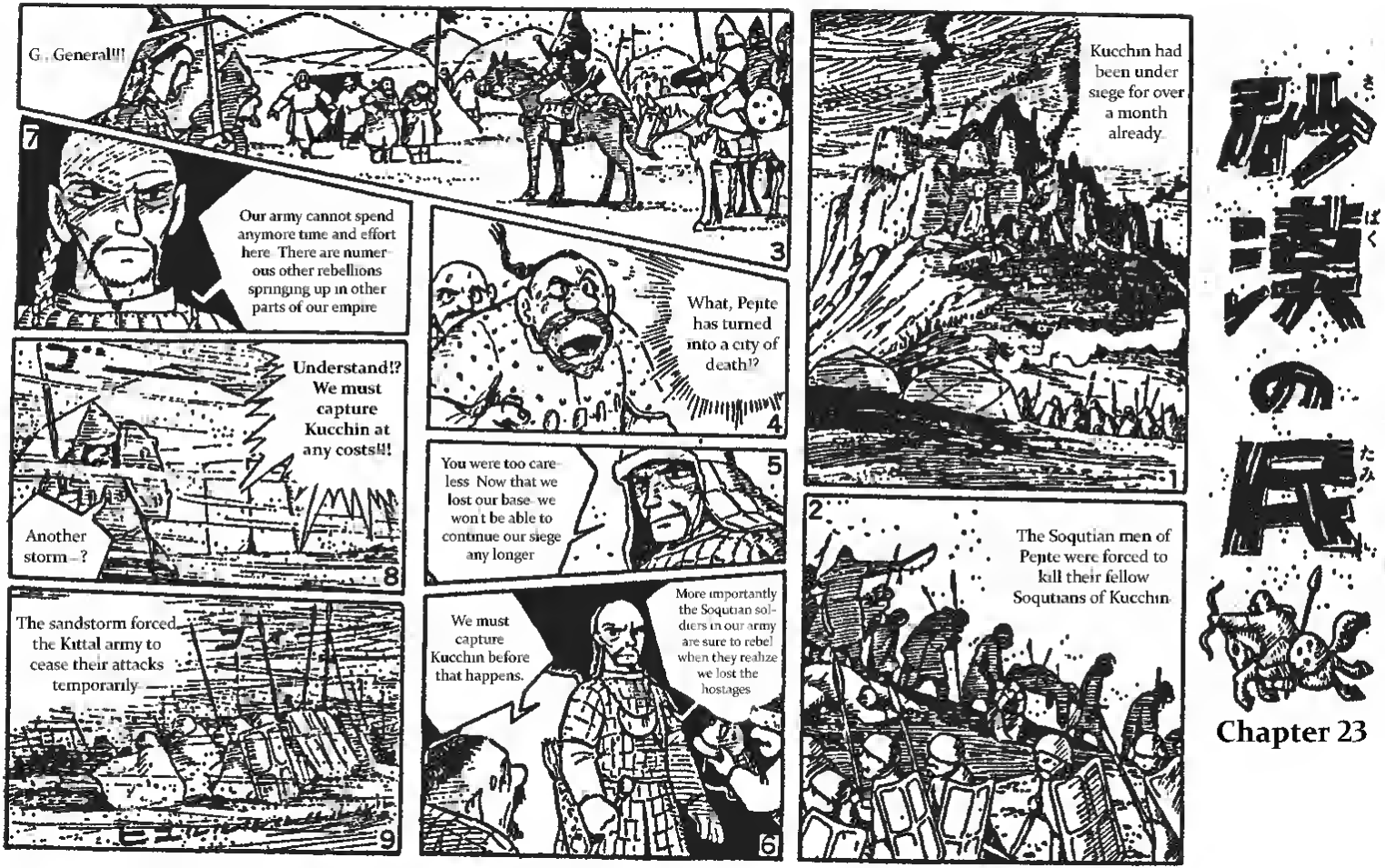

2
We will go to the last free city of Kucchin and take back our Soqutian men who are being forced to fight!
But we are NOT running away!

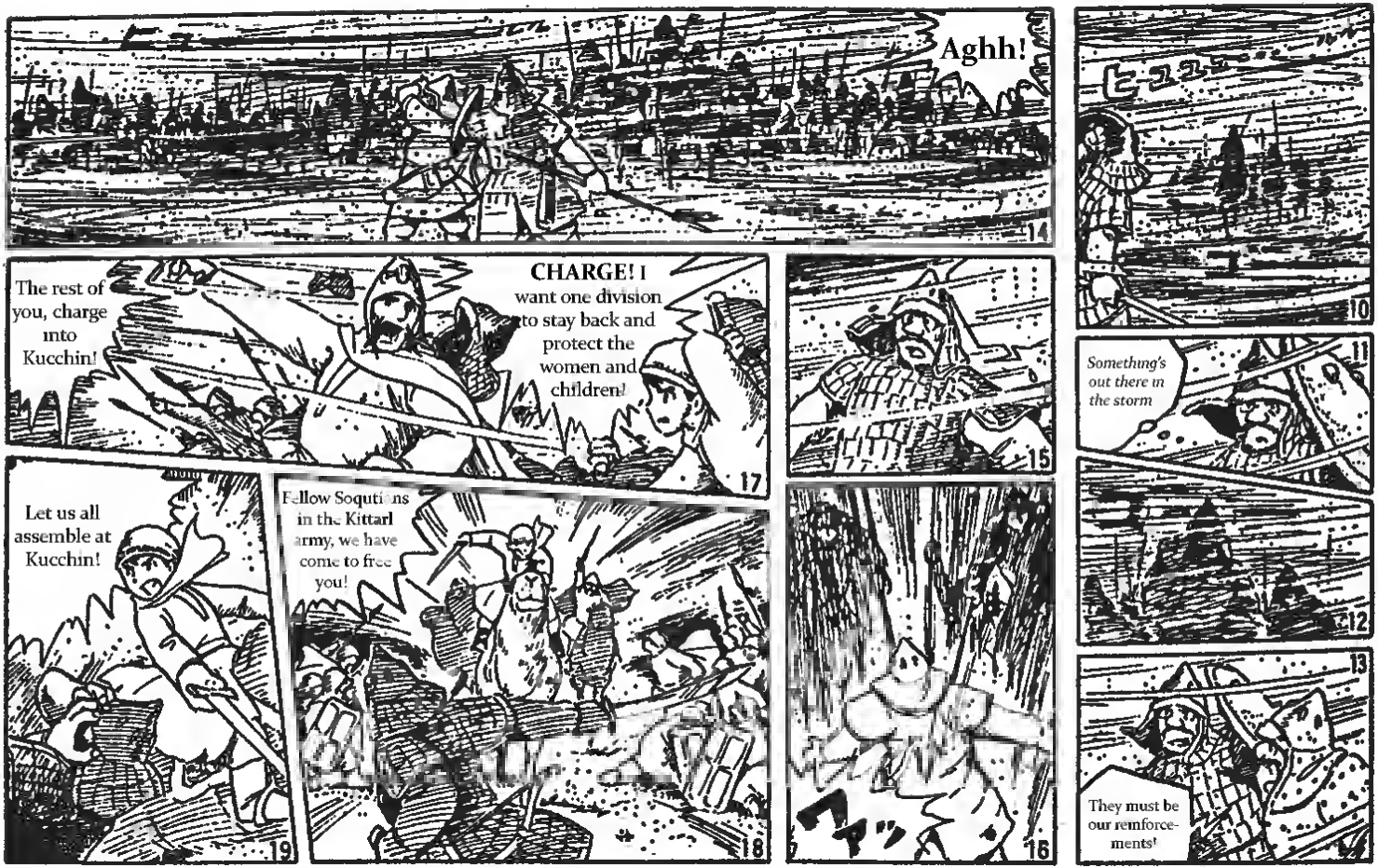

4
And then let us seek out a new world for us to live in beyond the desert!

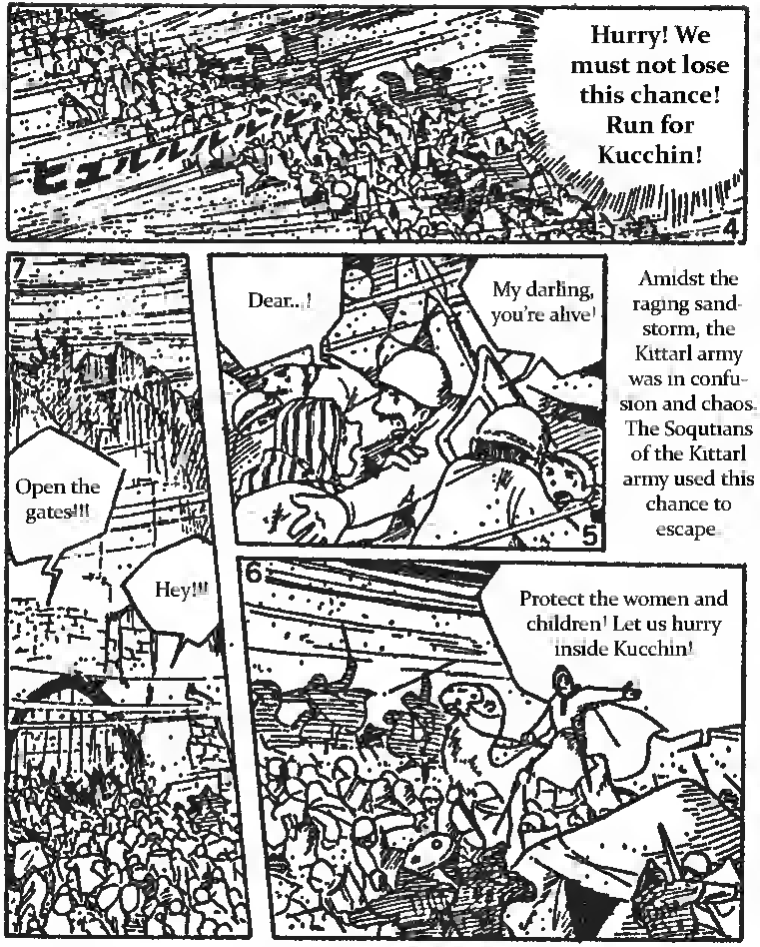
3
Let us stand together and share our food, happiness, and sorrows!

Chapter 22


Can anyone read the Soqutian scripts?
It's really a city of death. There's not a single living thing inside.
14
What do the engravings above the gates say?
15
It reads, "Farewell, our beloved home.."
It seems it was engraved recently.
16
3 Days Later
13
NO!
Tem...
10
We're going to somewhere where there's no war and live happily together!
SASAN IS NOT DEAD!
11
I'm sorry—but she's gone, Tem. You must let her peacefully sleep for eternity where the harsh wind won't reach her.
And I'm going to find her brother as well...!
12
And we'll make a new country there...
We'll go to a land where there are no Kittarls...
9
"We shall surely return to this land again one day..."
17

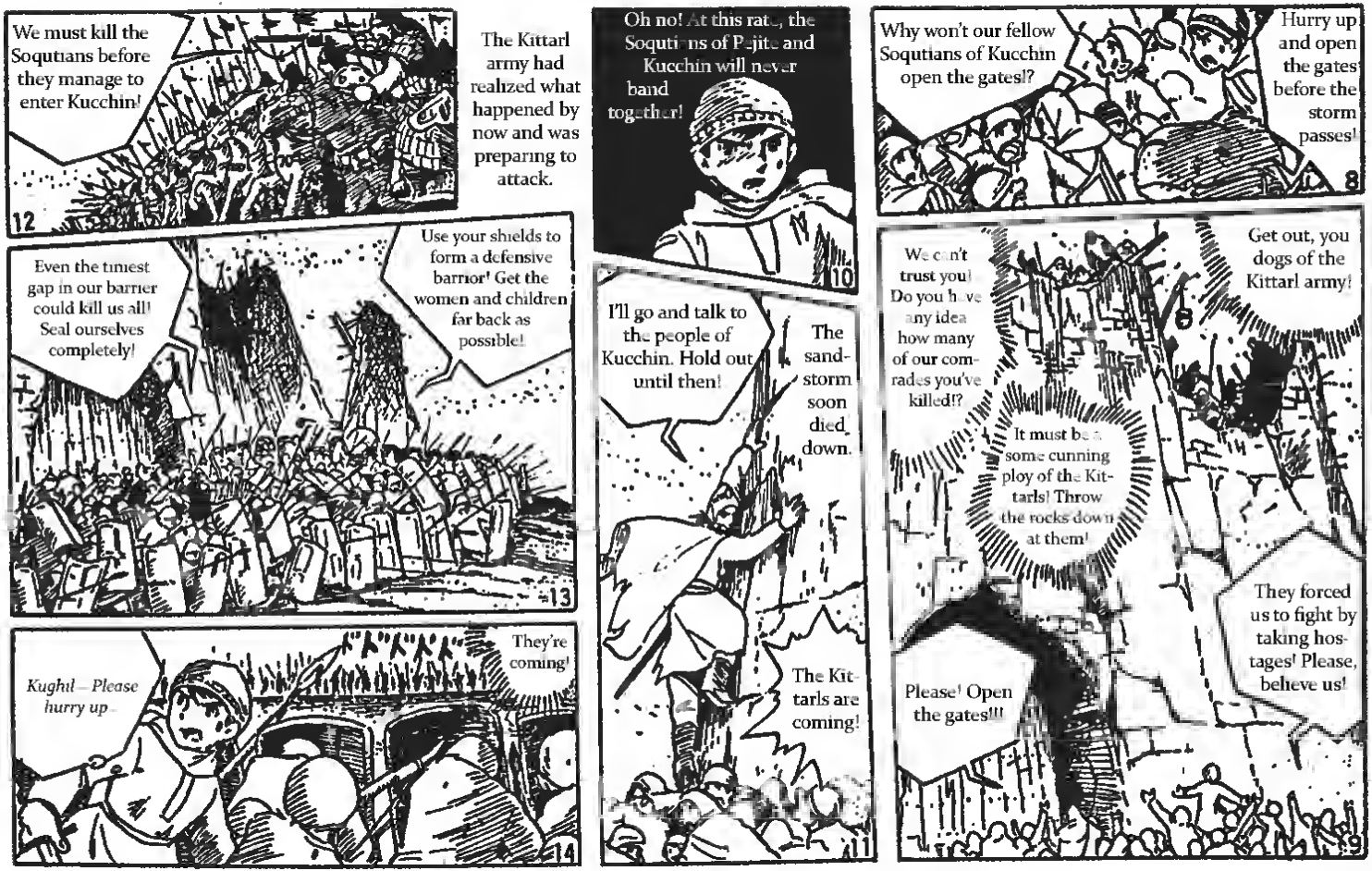

Kucchin had been under siege for over a month already
1
The Soqutian men of Pente were forced to kill their fellow Soqutians of Kucchin
2
What, Pente has turned into a city of death!?
3
4
You were too careless Now that we lost our base we won't be able to continue our siege any longer
5
We must capture Kucchin before that happens.
More importantly the Soqutian soldiers in our army are sure to rebel when they realize we lost the hostages
6
G, General!!!
7
Our army cannot spend anymore time and effort here There are numerous other rebellions springing up in other parts of our empire
Understand!? We must capture Kucchin at any costs!!!
Another storm—?
8
The sandstorm forced the Kittal army to cease their attacks temporarily—
9
砂漠の民
Chapter 23


Aghh!
14
10
Something's out there in the storm
11
12
13
They must be our reinforcements!
The rest of you, charge into Kucchin!
CHARGE! I want one division to stay back and protect the women and children!
17
15
Let us all assemble at Kucchin!
19
Fellow Soquti ns in the Kittarl army, we have come to free you!
18
16


Hurry! We must not lose this chance! Run for Kucchin!
4
Attack the Kittarls in the tents!
1
W-what's going on!?
2
AGHH!
3
Dear..!
My darling, you're alive!
5
Amidst the raging sand-storm, the Kittarl army was in confu-sion and chaos. The Soqutians of the Kittarl army used this chance to escape.
6
Protect the women and children! Let us hurry inside Kucchin!
7
Open the gates!!!
Hey!!!

激突の民

Chapter 24


We must kill the Soqutians before they manage to enter Kucchin!
12
The Kittarl army had realized what happened by now and was preparing to attack.
Oh no! At this rate, the Soqutians of Pajite and Kucchin will never band together!
10
Why won't our fellow Soqutians of Kucchin open the gates!?
Hurry up and open the gates before the storm passes!
8
Even the tiniest gap in our barrier could kill us all! Seal ourselves completely!
Use your shields to form a defensive barrier! Get the women and children far back as possible!
13
I'll go and talk to the people of Kucchin. Hold out until then!
The sandstorm soon died down.
The Kittarls are coming!
11
We can't trust you! Do you have any idea how many of our comrades you've killed!?
It must be a some cunning ploy of the Kittarls! Throw the rocks down at them!
Get out, you dogs of the Kittarl army!
They forced us to fight by taking hostages! Please, believe us!
Please! Open the gates!!!
9
Kughil— Please hurry up—
They're coming!
14

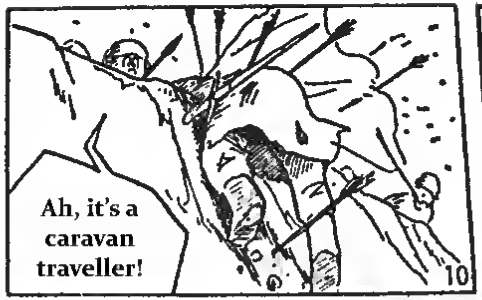
沸騰の民

Chapter 25

They're better off dead!
We have nothing against you but against those so-called Soqutians down there!
And just what will come of leaving them to their deaths?
That's right! They killed our brothers and friends!
12

I beg of you...
14
With their overwhelming numbers, it was only a mater of time until the Kittarls would decimate the Pejte Soqutians making their last stand outside the gates.
15

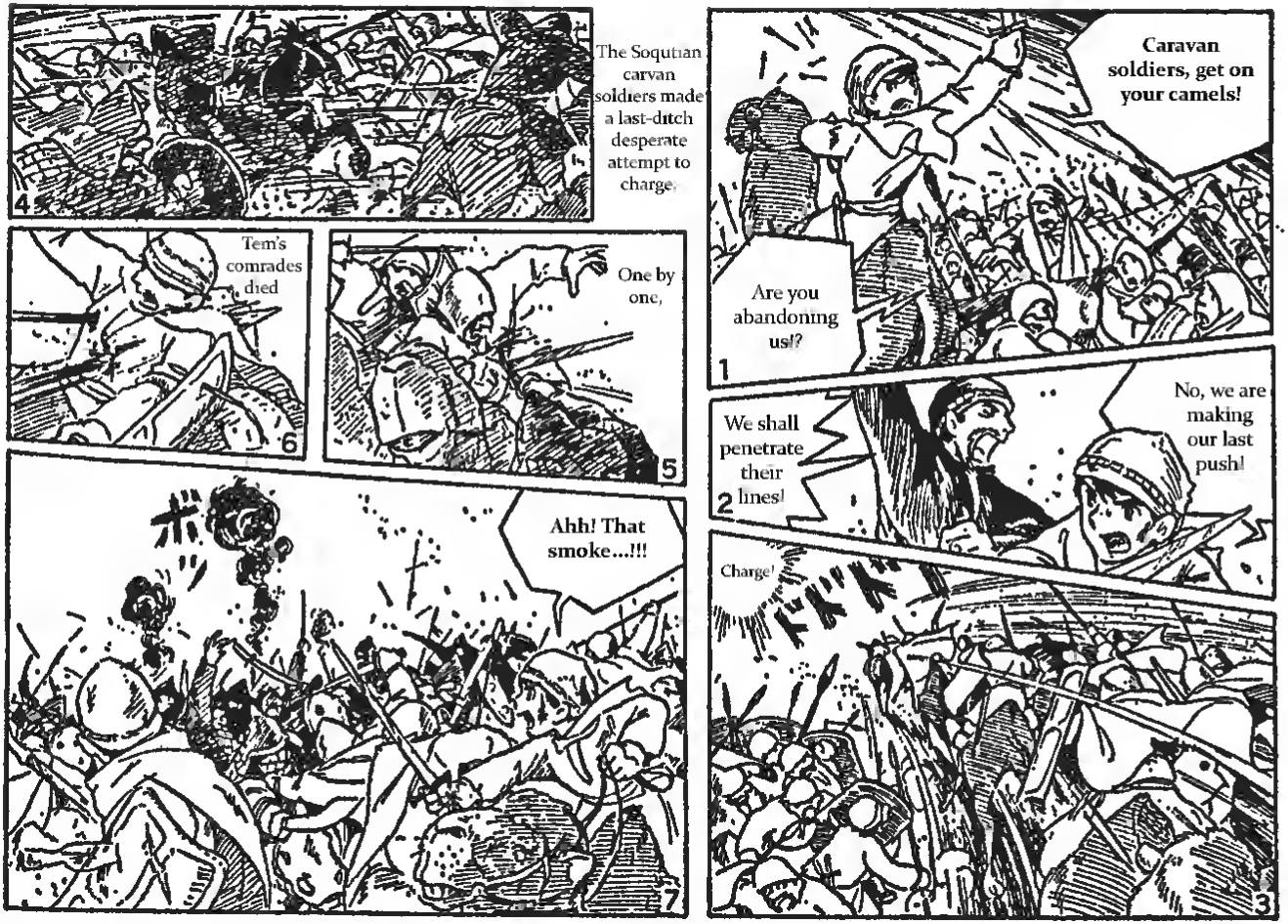
We Soqutians have always been divided into our respective cities and have never cooperated together! That is why we are always so easily defeated by our enemies!
But now is the time... No. This is our *last chance* to stand united lest we fall to the Kittarls! Please abandon your petty resentments and open the gates!
13


Ah, it's a caravan traveller!
10

Why must us Soqutians, who are now so few in numbers, continue to fight against each other? Together we stand but divided we fall!
Please listen to me!!!
11

8

Shoot him down!
9



砂漠の民

Final Chapter

Within an hour, the Kittarl army had been defeated by the relentless attack by the Pejte and Kucchin Soqutians
11
It was the Kucchin cavalry attacking from behind!
8
Kughil must have convinced them!
They opened the gates and have sent out reinforcements!
9
Stand back and fight!
10
Kughil... Why must all those dear to me die...
Can you hear our cries of joy...?
Temu...
12
What are you grieving for Tem? It is the duty of a warrior to give his life for the safety of his people.
13
Peace is still far from reach. Now go forth Tem, warrior of Soqute!
So stand up!
-THE END-
14